

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 08030 01 OF 02 161515Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00  
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01  
/053 W

-----161527Z 020058 /44

O 161501Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3919  
INFO AMCONSUL BELFAST  
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 08030

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, PIN/T, UK  
SUBJECT: JAY APPOINTMENT TEMPEST PICKS UP FORCE

REF: LONDON 7906

SUMMARY - THE POLITICAL STORM PRECIPITATED BY THE APPOINTMENT OF PETER JAY AS HM'S AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. CONTINUED TO BLOW, ITS FORCE INCREASING OVER THE MAY 12-13 PERIOD. CRITICISM FROM AND DISCONTENT AMONG LABOR BACKBENCHERS CONTINUED UNABATED, WHILE EXAGGERATED PRESS REPORTS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO JUSTIFY THE APPOINTMENT BY IMPLICITLY CRITICIZING INCUMBENT AMBASSADOR RAMSBOTHAM BROUGHT THE TORIES TO THE ATTACK. THE LIBERALS TOO ARE MANIFESTING CONCERN OVER THE APPOINTMENT. NEVERTHELESS, THE APPOINTMENT SEEMS SECURE -- INDEED CALLAGHAN, IN AN ACRIMONIOUS MEETING WITH THE PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY (PLP), IMPLIED THAT HE WOULD RESIGN RATHER THAN BACK DOWN. THIS AFFAIR MAY NOT INDICATE THAT CALLAGHAN IS LOSING HIS POLITICAL GRIP, BUT IT HAS CERTAINLY DAMAGED HIS REPUTATION, PROBABLY MORE SERIOUSLY THAN WE ORIGINALLY ANTICIPATED. END SUMMARY.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LONDON 08030 01 OF 02 161515Z

1. PETER JAY'S APPOINTMENT AS BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON HAS REMAINED THE CENTER OF A RAGING POLITICAL STORM. FOLLOWING PRIME MINISTER CALLAGHAN'S ABLE DEFENSE OF THE APPOINTMENT IN QUESTION TIME MAY 12, THE ARGUMENT WAS RENEWED IN A LATER MEETING WITH THE PLP. BY ALL ACCOUNTS, THE MEETING WAS UNUSUALLY ACRIMONIOUS,

EVEN BY LABOR PARTY STANDARDS. BACKBENCHERS DEMANDED THAT HE WITHDRAW THE APPOINTMENT AND ESTABLISH A PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE TO VET ALL FUTURE AMBASSADORIAL APPOINTMENTS. CALLAGHAN REPORTEDLY REJECTED BOTH DEMANDS, IMPLICITLY THREATENING TO RESIGN RATHER THAN BACK DOWN. UNFORTUNATELY, AT LEAST FROM CALLAGHAN'S STANDPOINT, OWEN WAS OUT OF THE COUNTRY AND THUS UNABLE TO DEFEND THE ACTION OR DIVERT PART OF THE HEAT AWAY FROM CALLAGHAN.

2. AND THINGS GOT WORSE. THE CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP, WHICH SEEMED CONTENT TO WATCH LABOR BACKBENCHERS FLAY THEIR LEADER, JUMPED INTO THE FRAY WITH A VENGEANCE FOLLOWING MAY 12 EVENING PRESS REPORTS THAT UNNAMED GOVERNMENT SOURCES HAD CALLED AMBASSADOR SIR PETER RAMSBOTHAM A "DREADFUL, OLD-FASHIONED SNOB" WHO CONVEYED ENTIRELY THE WRONG IMPRESSION OF BRITAIN TO THE U.S. THE DEVELOPMENT SHIFTED MEDIA INTEREST FROM JAY TO RAMSBOTHAM, BUT DAMAGED THE GOVERNMENT'S REPUTATION AND CREDIBILITY FURTHER.

3. RECONSTRUCTION OF THE RAMSBOTHAM INCIDENT REVEALED THAT THE PM'S PRESS SECRETARY, TOM MCCAFFREY, MET WITH PRESS REPRESENTATIVES IN A BACKGROUND SESSION MAY 12 TO DEFEND THE JAY APPOINTMENT. ACCORDING TO SHORTHAND NOTES AND THE RECOLLECTION OF SEVERAL JOURNALISTS PRESENT, MCCAFFREY SAID ONLY THAT OWEN WANTED TO GIVE THE WASHINGTON EMBASSY A LESS FORMAL ATMOSPHERE AND A "SHIRT SLEEVE" IMAGE MORE COMPATIBLE WITH THAT OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LONDON 08030 01 OF 02 161515Z

CARTER WHITE HOUSE. REPLYING TO QUESTIONS, MCCAFFREY REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THE ATMOSPHERE AT THE EMBASSY SHOULD BE "LESS POMPOUS", BUT AT NO TIME REFERRED TO THE INCUMBENT. THE EVENING STANDARD AND EVENING NEWS RAN SIMILAR, GREATLY EXAGGERATED, STORIES UNDER IDENTICAL HEADLINES: "SNOB ENVOY HAD TO GO". IT ALSO APPEARS THAT SEVERAL JUNIOR MINISTERS, WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION, ELABORATED ON MCCAFFREY'S REMARKS.

4. THE GOVERNMENT DENIED THE PRESS STORIES AND DETAILS OF MCCAFFREY'S MEETING WITH THE PRESS WERE PUBLISHED, WHILE CALLAGHAN AND OWEN REPORTEDLY CABLED REASSURANCES TO RAMSBOTHAM AND THE WHITEHALL MACHINE BEGAN TO CRANK OUT PRAISE OF RAMSBOTHAM'S PERFORMANCE. JAY TOO WAS QUICK TO PRAISE THE MAN HE IS TO REPLACE. BUT THE GENIE WOULDN'T GO BACK INTO THE BOTTLE.

5. THE LIBERAL PARTY IS REPORTEDLY BECOMING INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE JAY APPOINTMENT AND THE GOVERNMENT'S

SUBSEQUENT HANDLING OF THE POLITICAL FALLOUT, ESPECIALLY

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 08030 02 OF 02 161514Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00  
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01  
/053 W

-----161527Z 020049 /44

O 161501Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3920  
INFO AMCONSUL BELFAST  
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 08030

AS VOTER PERCEPTIONS OF THE LIBERALS MAY BE AFFECTED.  
LIKE THE PLP (REFTEL), THE LIBERALS BELIEVE CALLAGHAN  
HAS WASTED HIS MOST VALUABLE POLITICAL ASSET, HIS  
POPULAR IMAGE AS AN OPEN, HONEST LEADER.

6. COMMENT: WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THERE IS VIRTUALLY  
NO CHANCE OF CALLAGHAN WITHDRAWING THE APPOINTMENT OR OF  
JAY DECLINING IT, SINCE SUCH ACTION WOULD BE INTERPRETED  
AS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS. NOR WOULD WE WISH TO CHANGE OUR  
ORIGINAL ASSESSMENT THAT THE JAY APPOINTMENT HAS HURT  
BOTH CALLAGHAN AND OWEN POLITICALLY. THE RAMSBOTHAM  
AFFAIR, MOREOVER, HAS MAGNIFIED THAT DAMAGE. THESE  
DEVELOPMENTS COULD WELL STRAIN RELATIONS BETWEEN  
CALLAGHAN AND OWEN AS WELL. CALLAGHAN MUST REGRET THAT  
HE LET OWEN PERSUADE HIM THAT REACTION TO THE APPOINT-  
MENT WOULD BE WITHIN ACCEPTABLE LIMITS, AND MIGHT  
NOW QUESTION OWEN'S POLITICAL JUDGMENT. OWEN MUST BE  
AWARE OF THIS PROBABILITY, AND BE HIMSELF DISTURBED BY  
THE WAY NUMBER 10 HANDLED THINGS IN HIS ABSENCE. THE  
LIBERAL CONCERN IS UNLIKELY TO BE TRANSLATED INTO ACTION  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LONDON 08030 02 OF 02 161514Z

IN THE NEAR-TERM, BUT WILL CERTAINLY AFFECT LIBERAL ATTITUDES WHEN THE PACT COMES UP FOR RENEWAL IN THE FALL. THE ENTIRE EPISODE, HOWEVER, SUGGESTS A LARGER QUESTION, ESPECIALLY WHEN SEEN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RECENT PARLIAMENTARY TACTICAL MISCALCULATION THAT FORCED THE GOVERNMENT INTO A PACT WITH THE LIBERALS: IS CALLAGHAN LOSING HIS POLITICAL GRIP? THE INDICATIONS ARE THAT HE IS, AND THIS PERCEPTION AT LEAST IS GROWING IN THE PLP. OF COURSE, IT COULD TURN OUT THAT THESE TWO RECENT POLITICAL GAFFS WERE NOTHING MORE THAN ISOLATED INCIDENTS, ALBEIT DAMAGING ONES IN TERMS OF INTERNAL LABOR PARTY POLITICS.

SPIERS.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** AMBASSADOR DESIGNATE, CORRUPTION, PRESS COMMENTS, POLITICAL SITUATION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Sent Date:** 16-May-1977 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Date:** 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1977LONDON08030  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D770173-0434  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** LONDON  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1977/newtext/t19770553/aaaabtym.tel  
**Line Count:** 188  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** 66214693-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 77 LONDON 7906  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 11-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 2507316  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** JAY APPOINTMENT TEMPEST PICKS UP FORCE  
**TAGS:** PFOR, PGOV, PINT, US, UK, (JAY, PETER)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/66214693-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009